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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Attached Distribution

FROM:

[Redacted]

Chief, Geographic Issues Division
Office of Global Issues

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SUBJECT:

Gaza Strip: Israeli Settlement Activity under
the National Unity Government [Redacted]

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1. The attached report reviews the pace at which settlements are being built and populated in the Gaza Strip under Israel's National Unity Government. [Redacted]

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2. This report was prepared by [Redacted] our Near
East-Africa Branch. [Redacted]

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SUBJECT: Gaza Strip: Israeli Settlement Activity under
the National Unity Government [REDACTED]

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OGI/GD/NEA/[REDACTED] (22Dec86)

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Washington, D.C. 20505

Gaza Strip: Israeli Settlement Activity
under the National Unity Government

SUMMARY

Although in absolute terms Israel's settlement effort in the Gaza Strip ranks below that in the Golan Heights and well below that in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip was the only territory where the pace of construction within settlements increased during the first two years of the National Unity Government. This increase consisted mainly of construction of one new settlement, the completion of another, and the development of extensive tourist facilities on the Mediterranean shore. [redacted]

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[redacted] Israel began construction on 224 new residential units in Gaza Strip settlements since September 1984, compared to 178 during the last two years of the pro-settlement Likud government. Despite this new construction, settlement population increased by only about 250 compared to about 1,050 for the period between September 1982 and September 1984. Partly because of the large number of still unoccupied housing units, we foresee no near term increase in the pace of settlement construction following the switch of Israeli Prime Ministers that occurred in mid October. Indeed, construction may actually decline. [redacted]

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This paper was prepared by [redacted] the Geographic Issues Division, Office of Global Issues. The information contained herein is updated to 31 October 1986. Comments and questions may be addressed to [redacted] Chief, Near East-Africa Branch [redacted]

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Gaza Strip: Israeli Settlement Activity
under the National Unity Government

Background

Since June 1967, Israel has followed a policy of encouraging permanent Jewish settlement in the occupied territories in order to solidify its claim to and control over the land. Of the 17 Israeli settlements¹ now in the Gaza Strip, the Labor government established four (all in the southern half of the territory) between 1967 and 1977. Although these--like others in the Golan Heights and Jordan Valley--were generally agricultural in nature, their establishment helped meet the Labor Party's objective of building settlements in areas considered to be strategic for the defense of Israel, and therefore to be retained under any future peace for territory compromise. (Only in March 1986, after heated debate between hawks and doves, did the Labor Party platform exclude the southern Gaza Strip from its list of security areas.) On coming to power in 1977 the Likud government continued Labor's settlement policy in the Gaza Strip, but tripled the effort in an attempt to make that territory virtually indivisible from Israel. From 1977 to 1984, Israel under Likud established 11 new settlements in the Gaza Strip. [redacted]

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As part of an overall political compromise worked out when Labor and Likud formed the National Unity Government in September 1984, the two parties agreed to establish only six new settlements within the coming year--all in the West Bank. The coalition government also decided to defer establishment of other settlements--some of which were planned for the Gaza Strip--that had already been approved by previous governments. Finally, the National Unity Government's basic policy guidelines ensured the continued development of existing settlements. However, economic constraints and Labor's reluctance to increase settlement in areas that could be the subject of future peace negotiations slowed the pace of construction in the West Bank and Golan Heights during the past two years. In the Gaza Strip, on the other hand, circumstances have been such that construction of new housing units actually increased under the National Unity Government. [redacted]

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¹ Other sites of Israeli civilian land use that we list with the settlements are the Erez Industrial Zone and the Israeli Border/Customs station near Rafah. [redacted]

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New Construction

[redacted] since September 1984:

- ° 224 housing units were started, of which 196 were completed. This compares with 178 units started between September 1982 and September 1984, of which all were completed during that period.
- ° Population capacity in the Gaza Strip settlements increased by about 935 people to 3,455 as compared to an increase of about 850 during the previous two-year period.
- ° 144 additional, nonresidential, buildings were started, of which 52 are greenhouses. This compares with 289 nonresidential buildings begun during the previous two years, of which 187 are greenhouses.

All in all, since the United States peace initiative of September 1982 that proposed a freeze on Israeli settlement construction, Israel has begun 402 new residential units in the Gaza Strip and increased population capacity there by 1925 people. [redacted]

Most of the recent construction in the Gaza Strip is concentrated in four settlements: Bene 'Azmon, Bedolah, Neue Degalim, and Gaza Beach. Bene 'Azmon--approved by the previous, Likud, government--is the only Gaza Strip settlement constructed entirely during the past two years and is one of only eight new settlements established in the territories under the National Unity Government.² Bedolah existed in September 1984 as graded street patterns in the sand; since then Israel has built 25 houses and 46 greenhouses there. In terms of population, Neue Degalim is the largest settlement in the Gaza Strip; in the past two years settlers have added 53 houses to the community. [redacted]

But it is at Gaza Beach that settlers have constructed fully one third of the Gaza Strip's new Israeli housing units. These 76 beach front apartments--not yet ready for occupancy--may not be for permanent residents, however, and instead may serve as quarters for temporary holiday guests. Gaza Strip settlers have been developing the beach since 1980 in order to attract vacationers and their money. In the past two years, 29 beach

² In late 1985, settlers unilaterally established another new settlement in the Gaza Strip--Kefar Yam. However, this small coastal community does not represent new construction but rather refurbishing of previously inhabited Arab houses. Of the remaining six settlements, five are in the West Bank and one is in the Golan Heights. [redacted]

shelters, two restaurants, two swimming pools (one Olympic size), and several other structures have been built here, in addition to the apartment complex. [REDACTED]

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Population

Today, we estimate that 1,940 Jewish settlers live in the Gaza Strip settlements, an increase of about 250 since September 1984 and of about 1,300 since September 1982.³ In recent years the number of new settlers has not kept pace with the number of new housing units in the Gaza Strip; unoccupied housing could absorb almost 1,500 more people than are presently living in the settlements. Part of this gap between actual population and population capacity reflects recently completed but as yet uninhabited houses and apartments in Bene 'Azmon, Neue Degalim, and Gaza Beach. However, many older, agricultural settlements that have been experiencing economic problems during the past several years also have much unoccupied housing. Five agricultural settlements actually lost population during the past two years; one, Morag; was completely abandoned. [REDACTED]

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Prospects

In our judgment, construction in Gaza Strip settlements will continue under a Likud-headed National Unity Government, but possibly at a slower pace than that witnessed in the past two years. Because Likud sees the West Bank as having greater economic, religious, and strategic significance to Israel, and because of the West Bank's much larger settler population that has influence with many Likud members, Likud probably will try to direct most of the limited resources available for settlement toward the West Bank instead of the Gaza Strip. In addition, we foresee a possible slowdown in construction until the large number of unoccupied housing units begin to fill. (Presently, the ratio of unoccupied to occupied units in the Gaza Strip is one and one half times greater than that in the West Bank.) [REDACTED]

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At least three new settlements are in the planning stages. As yet, however, no preparatory groundwork has begun on any additional Gaza Strip settlements. The National Unity Government

³ To estimate settler population, [REDACTED] supplemented by US Embassy Tel Aviv reports, Israeli press reports [REDACTED] to determine the number of each settlement's occupied dwelling units. We then multiply each such unit by the settlement's average family size: 4.2 for secular settlements; 5.0 for religious settlements. We do not include temporary residents in our population count, although dwellings reserved for transients and holiday guests are included in our population capacity figures. [REDACTED]

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may consider establishment of these and other settlements, but only on a very selective case by case basis and as part of a political compromise. [REDACTED]

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Appendix A: Settlement Highlights September 1984
to September 1986

- ° In October 1984, on a first ever visit to the Gaza Strip by an Israeli President, Hayim Herzog dedicated the new synagogue in **Ganne Tal**. [] 25X1
- ° In September 1985, Gaza Strip settlers established a civil guard for their own protection. In addition, they decided to move into the old Jewish quarter in the city of Gaza. Such a move would certainly increase the chances for violent confrontation, as witnessed in Nablus and Hebron, but as yet no action has been taken to realize this goal. [] 25X1
- ° In December 1985, about 10 people moved into five unoccupied Arab houses on the beach west of Khan Yunis, thereby establishing the settlement of **Kefar Yam**. This is the first such incident of occupying existing Arab housing in the Gaza Strip. The settlers intend to make their homes into a fisherman's village. [] 25X1
- ° In April 1986, the Israel Defense Forces prevented **Rafiah Yam** and other settlers from establishing an unapproved wildcat settlement at Bi'r al-Sultan--the site intended for resettlement of the Palestinian refugees from Canada Camp. In talks with Egypt, Israel had agreed to repatriate the approximately 5500 Canada Camp refugees cut off from their friends and family when Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt in 1982. Israeli settlers in the Gaza Strip have consistently, although futilely, opposed this action. [] 25X1
- ° In May 1986, Jewish Agency Settlement Director Nissim Zvili suggested that **Nezarim** was badly sited, too small to be viable and should be turned over to the Canada Camp refugees. After much protest by Jewish settlers, the issue was dropped. [] 25X1
- ° Around July 1986, a new settlement nucleus took over the ailing agricultural moshav **Qatif**. [] 25X1
- ° In October 1986, Deputy Prime Minister David Levy dedicated the settlements of **Bedolah** and **Bene 'Azmon**. [] 25X1

Appendix B: Israeli Settlements in the Gaza Strip, August 1986.

<u>Settlements and other Civilian Land Use (Type ^a)</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>New Units since Sept. 1984</u>		<u>Still Under Construction</u>
		<u>Capacity</u>	<u>Completed</u>	
<u>Total</u>	<u>1,940</u>	<u>3,455</u>	<u>196</u>	<u>28</u>
1. Bedolah (M)	110	125	25	0
2. Bene 'Azmon (MS)	0	195	39	3
3. Ele Sinai (C)	50	65	3	14
4. Erez Industrial Zone (I)	0	0	0	0
5. Gadid (M)	160	180	0	0
6. Ganne Tal (M)	250	300	0	0
7. Gan Or (M)	125	200	0	0
8. Gaza Beach (RS)	0	320	76	0
9. Israeli Border Checkpoint (G)	0	0	0	0
10. Kefar Darom (E)	20	55	0	0
11. Kefar Yam	10	20	0	0
12. Mizpe 'Azmona (M)	80	155	0	0
13. Morag (M)	0	185	0	0
14. Newe Daqalim (RC/Y)	685	895	42	11
15. Nezarim (K)	25	50	0	0
16. Nezer Hazani (M)	250	350	0	0
17. Nisanit (C)	30	40	0	0
18. Qatif (M)	75	190	0	0
19. Rafiah Yam (C)	70	110	11	0

^a C-Community settlement, E-Educational Facility, G-Government facility, I-Industrial site, K-Kibbutz, M-Moshav, MS-Moshav shitufi, N-Nahal settlement, RC-Regional Center, RS-Recreational site, Y-Yeshiva.

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